

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Plan to be Updated

Five Wyoming state agencies have launched a project to update the state's comprehensive plan for mental health and substance abuse services and related issues.

The initial plan document, developed and released in 2001, was called "Reclaiming Wyoming: A Comprehensive Blueprint for the Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment of Substance Abuse."

Leaders of the departments of Health, Education, Corrections, Family Services and Workforce Services have been meeting regularly to discuss meeting the needs of children and families their various programs serve.

"Our agencies serve many of the same people so working together makes good sense," said Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer. "We want the plan to support the shared goals of our agencies."

Rodger McDaniel, Wyoming Department of Health deputy director for mental health and substance abuse services, said legislation and developments in behavioral health have significantly affected Wyoming's substance abuse and mental health system since 2001. "That's why we believe a revised "blueprint" is in order," he said. "We want the new plan to reflect input from students, parents, professionals and others who have ideas about improving mental health and substance abuse programs in Wyoming."

Bob Lampert, Wyoming Department of Corrections director, said "A majority of our inmates and offenders struggle with substance abuse and many of the same people also suffer with mental health issues. It is critical to address these two areas if we are going to see any positive progress on rehabilitation among the populations we serve."

Superintendent of Public Instruction Jim McBride added, "The Department of Education actively supports the blueprint work being conducted by the Department of Health. Our work together will lead to improved services from our agencies."

McDaniel said, "This is an exciting time for people involved in mental health and addiction services. There are both challenges and opportunities associated with possible health care reform, insurance parity for mental health, research developments and the use of the internet and other technology."

Interested Wyoming residents are invited to participate in updating the plan by visiting www.wyo-blueprint2010.com. A series of group meetings is also being scheduled around the state. To participate or schedule a group meeting, please contact Nancy VanDeMark at

nrvandemark@comcast.net or (303) 808-1960. VanDeMark can also be contacted by those interested in individual discussions.

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